

Organic Waste Collection

Preventative measures you can take during warm summer months

to reduce having flies/maggots in your bin

The Hamilton Board of Health would like to offer a few tips to help you avoid attracting flies to your bin and reduce your chances of getting flies/maggots during warm summer months.

Maggots are a common, naturally occurring problem with many municipal organic collection programs. Before we separated our organics into the green cart, maggots were commonly found in residents' garbage bags or containers, even if tightly sealed. While maggots cannot be guaranteed to be totally eliminated, there are preventative measures we can use to reduce the likelihood of them occurring.

Maggots are fly larvae and occur when flies lay eggs on organic waste. They typically have a 7-day life cycle with fluctuations depending on temperatures and other conditions such as moisture. Maggots are more common in warmer temperatures. To prevent maggots from occurring we have to prevent mature flies from laying eggs in the green cart by eliminating odors and reducing their access to the green cart.

Avoid maggots in your green bin by

- Wrapping your meat scraps and bones in a sheet of newspaper before putting them in your green bin.
- Freezing your meat scraps until your pick up day.
- Putting some weather stripping along the top of your green bin where the lid rests. Weather stripping is a long strip of foam that seals air gaps in your doors and windows. It can be found at most hardware stores.
- Putting a layer of yard waste on top of your food scraps.
- Rinsing your green bin with a mild detergent and water. For those hard-to-reach spots at the bottom of your green bin consider using an old broom.

If you end up with maggots in your green bin, try getting rid of them by:

- Opening the lid to allow the birds to eat the maggots.
- Spraying the top and inside with vinegar

Green Cart

- Flies are attracted to your green cart by the odor of rotting food. Sanitation is important to reduce this odor. Your green cart should be cleaned regularly using a solution of borax and water or vinegar and water. Alternatively, mild soaps can be used to clean your green cart. Please ensure no cleaning solution is left in the cart for collection. Wash and rinse your cart over a landscaped area such as a lawn or shrubbery, not near gutters or storm drains as the rinse water might wash down storm drains and flow directly into local creeks and waterways. Be sure your green cart is dry before use.
- Remove all residual liquid from the bottom of your cart after collection to detract flies.
- Line the bottom of your cart with paper products such as crumpled newspaper, boxboard, fibre egg cartons, take-out trays or greasy pizza boxes to absorb liquid and prevent material from sticking to the bottom of the cart. Large paper bags, such as leaf and yard waste bags, may also be used to line the cart.
- Odors can also be eliminated using locally available deodorizers such as Green Bin Deodorizer. Try sprinkling your cart with vinegar or baking soda as well to eliminate odors.
- Store your cart in a well-ventilated area.
- Cover your green cart with black plastic sheeting such as a garbage bag during the summer months to trap heat and reduce fly survival. Flies are most active at average temperatures of 20 - 25°C and become undetectable above 45°C and below 10°C.

Food Preparation

- Flies are particularly attracted by protein sources, mostly meat and bones. Try waiting until the night before collection before placing these items in the green cart.
- Drain as much liquid as possible from the organic waste.
- Wrap food tightly in newspaper or other paper products (such as boxboard) before placing it in the green cart.
- If space permits, freeze meat / fruit / vegetable organic waste in newspaper or paper bags then put it into the green cart the night before collection.
- When cleaning out your refrigerator, try waiting until the day before your collection day, rather than the day after.

Storage

- The longer your organic waste remains in the green cart, the longer flies have the opportunity to breed in it. Put your green cart out for collection every week, even if it isn't full.
- Flies are not readily attracted to green carts if wet and rotting foods aren't exposed. Try alternating two to four inch layers of kitchen waste with a layer of dry leaf and yard waste or paper products. A light sprinkling of soil to cover food layers will also help suppress smells and flies.
- Certain odors will repel flies such as pennyroyal, camphor, eucalyptus, mint or bay. Try hanging some bruised leaves of these herbs in clusters or applying dabs of herbal oil to the outside of your green cart.
- Line the outer rim of the cart with salt or vinegar to prevent flies from entering the container. Sprinkle rock salt or lime inside the cart as a further preventative measure.

